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Message Text

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ACTION OS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CU-04 L-03 A-01 AID-20 ABF-01

H-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01

USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 DRC-01 /087 W
---------- 013550
R 151344Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5777

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FOR OPR/AS AND ARA/CEN

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASCH, PFOR
SUBJECT: TURNOVER AT LINCOLN SCHOOL

SUMMARY. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF LINCOLN SCHOOL HAS RESIGNED AND BEEN REPLACED BY A NEW BOARD WHICH SEEKS CONTINUED USG SUPPORT AND SAYS IT WISHES TO CONTINUE TRUE BINATIONAL PROGRAM. SUPPORTERS OF OLD BOARD ARE CONSIDERING ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE SCHOOL. IN MEANTIME, LINCOLN SCHOOL FACES SERIOUS FINANCIAL CRISIS. EMBASSY IS COUNSELLINGHCALM CONSIDERATION OF SITUATION BY ALL PARTIES, GIVING THE NEW BOARD THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT DURING THIS EARLY PERIOD. RETURN VISIT BY DR. CARLTON BENZ IN JANUARY TO EVALUATE THE SITUATION MAY BE NECESSARY. END SUMMARY

1. AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF LINCOLN SCHOOL ON DECEMBER 1 (ASSEMBLY IS SENIOR POLICY-MAKING BODY OF SCHOOL MADE UP OF ALL SHAREHOLDERS), FOLLOWING EVENTS TRANSPIRED:

A. ASSEMBLY PASSED REVISION OF SEVERAL ARTICLES OF BY-LAWS HAVING NET EFFECT OF REDUCING POWERS OF THE GIVERNING BOARD.

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B. BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BY PRIOR AGREEMENT, THEN

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RESIGNED EN MASSE.

C. ASSEMBLY PROCEEDED TO ELECT AN ENTIRELY NEW BOARD COMPOSED--AS BEFORE--OF FIVE COSTA RICANS AND FIVE AMERICANS. NONE OF THESE INDIVISUALS IS WELL KNOWN TO EMBASSY.

2. WHILE LON-FESTERING DISSATISFACTION WITH CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE OLD BOARD ON THE PART OF A FEW ACTIVISTS, BASED ON PERSONAL AS WELL AS POLICY GROUNDS, WAS CLEARLY MANIFESTED IN THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE UNDERLYING ISSUE WHICH TROUBLED MANY PARENTS WAS AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAM OF EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AND A RELATED STIFF INCREASE IN FEES PROPOSED BY THE OLD BOARD. THIS PROGRAM HAD BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE NEW DIRECTOR OF LINCOLN SCHOOL, JOHN EVERS.

3. EVERS HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT HE WILL ALSMOST SURELY RESIGN NEXT WEEK. HE HAS BEEN INVITED BY THE NEW BOARD TO STAY ON, BUT IS NOT PREPARED TO DO SO UNLESS HIS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IS SUBSTANTIALLY CARRIED FORWARD, WHICH DOES NOT AT PRESENT SEEM LIKELY.

4. EMOTIONS AMONG PARENTS AT THE SCHOOL, BOTH AMERICAN AND COSTA RICAN, ARE RUNNING HIGH AS A RESULT OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS. HOWEVER, THE OLD AND NEW BOARDS, EVERS, AND THE EMBASSY ARE ALL URGING A COOLING-OFF PERIOD WITH CALM AND RELECTION BE FORE FURTHER IRRESTRIEVABLE STEPS ARE TAKEN. AT PRESENT WE SEE THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS:

A. SUPPORTERS OF THE OLD BOARD (AND OF EVERS) MAY PRESS FOR CONVOCATION OF ANOTHER GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO REVERSE THIS WEEK'S ACTION. THIS COURSE OF ACTION SEEMS INCREASINGLY LESS LIKELY AS POSITIONS TEND TO HARDEN.

B. THESE SAME ELEMENTS MAY MOVE TO ESTABLISH A NEW BINATIONAL SCHOOL. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT EFFORTS ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF SUCH A MOVE--AND IT IS LIKELY THAT JOHN EVERS WOULD BE INVITED TO ASSUME THE DIRECTORSHIP. THE AMBASSADOR HAS MADE CLEAR TO KEY MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP THAT THERE IS NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

POSSIBILITY OF USG SUPPORT FOR A NEW SCHOOL DURING THE FIRST YEAR; WE HAVE CAREFULLY AVOIDED ANY HINT OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO SUCH A MOVE, WHICH WOULD ALMOST SURELY DESTROY ANY HOPE OF CONTINUED VIABILITY AT LINCOLN SCHOOL.

C. IN ANY CASE, THERE WILL SURELY BE A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF STUDENT WITHDRAWALS FROM LINCOLN SCHOOL AND CORRESPONDING TRANSFER APPLICANTS AT COSTA RICA ACADEMY (WHICH

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ALSO RECEIVES U.S. ASSISTANCE), COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL (WHICH DOES NOT) AND OTHER SCHOOLS. THE ACADEMY HAS ALREADY RECEIVED SEVERAL INQUIRIES, BUT IS WISELY DEFERRING ANY ACTION UNTIL THE DUST SETTLES.

5. IN THE MEANTIME, THE NEW BOARD AT LINCOLN SCHOOL IS FACING AN IMMINENT FINANCIAL CRISIS. THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT THE SCHOOL HAS OBLIGATIONS FOR TEACHERS' SALARIES, AGUINALDOS AND OTHER EXPENSES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 800,000 COLONES, WITH ONLY 15,000 COLONES IN THE TILL. TUITION PAYMENTS FOR NEXT TERM WHICH WOULD NORMALLY COVER MUCH OF THE EXPENSE HAVE NOT BEEN COMING IN DURING THE CURRENT CRISIS. PERSONAL LOANS TERADITIONALLY FLOATED BY THE OLD BOARD MEMBERS TO CARRY THE SCHOOL OVER WILL NOT NOW BE PROCESSED, AND EVEN AN INSTITUTIONAL LOAN PENDING FROM THE SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE MAY BE IN JEOPARDY. SHOULD LINCOLN BE UNABLE TO MEET ITS FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE GOCR MIGHT INTERVENE THE SCHOOL TO ASSURE RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT.

6. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE NEW BOARD CALLED ON THE AMBASSADOR ON DECEMBER 14. THEY PROFESSED THEIR DEDICATION TO BINATIONAL EDUCATION AT LINCOLN SCHOOL AND THEIR RECOGNITION OF THE NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS--INCLUDING HIGHER SALARIES FOR TEACHERS. THEY MAINTAINED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE TO MOVE AHEAD AS RAPIDLY WITH THE PROGRAM--AND INCREASED FEES--PROPOSED BY THE OLD BOARD. THE NEW BOARD ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR OF ITS DESIRE TO CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE EMBASSY, AND EMPHASIZED ITS CONTINUING NEED OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE FROM THE OFFICE OF OVERSEAS SCHOOLS.

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ACTION OS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CU-04 L-03 A-01 AID-20 ABF-01

H-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4778

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASCH, PFOR
SUBJ: TURNOVER AT LINCOLN SCHOOL

7. COMMENT: IT IS TOO EARLY TO REACH CONSLUSIONS OR MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS UNFORTUNATE MATTER. CLEARLY FOR FORWARD MOTION OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL WILL BE IMPAIRED, AND THE NEW BOARD FACES GRAVE PROBLEMS IN MEETING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. PASSIONS HAVE BEEN AROUSED OR FANNED WITHIN THE SCHOOL AND IN THE OUTSIDE COMMUNITY WHICH ARE THEMSELVES UNFORTUNATE AND WILL SURELY COMPLICATE EFFORTS TO PICK UP THE PIECES IN THE OLD SCHOOL AND/OR A POSSIBLE NEW SCHOOL. THE EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF MANY U.S. AND COSTA RICAN FAMILIES--INCLUDING U.S. GOVERNMENT CHILDREN--WILL BE AFFECTED. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF PUBLIC RECRIMINATIONS WHICH COULD ACCENTUATE RIFTS WITHIN THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND EVEN BETWEEN COSTA RICANS ON ONE SIDE AND AMERICANS ON THE OTHER. NEVERTHELESS, THESE EXTREME THREATS HAVE NOT MATERIALIZED AND WITH SOME GOOD WILL AND GOOD SENSE ALL AROUND NEED NOT MATERIALIZE.
AT PRESNT, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES AND IS ACTING ON THE BASIS THAT THE NEW BOARD OF LINCOLN SCHOOL DESERVES THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT AS IT GRAPPLES WITH ITS PROBLEMS AND STRIVES
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TO MAINTAIN THE SCHOOL AS A VIABLE AND ADEQUATE BINATIONAL INSTITUTION.

8. THE EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES THAT A RETURN VISIT TO SAN JOSE BY DR. CARLTON BENZ SOMETIME IN JANUARY--AFTER LINCOLN SCHOOL HAS REAPPRAISED ITS GOALS AND POLICIES BUT BEFORE FINAL DECISIONS MUST BE MADE ON NEXT YEAR'S GRANTS--MAY WELL BE NECESSARY TO EVALUATE THE LOCAL SITUATION AND TO ADVISE BOTH THE SCHOOL AND THE EMBASSY ON FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE OVERSEAS SCHOOL PROGRAM IN SAN JOSE.
VAKY

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